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COUNCIL OF VICTORIA INC.

Code of Ethical Practice – A second step for the Victorian youth sector

Report on Phase 1 of consultation

2nd Draft, March 2014

The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria

The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) is a vibrant, member based organisation that represents and advocates for young people and the organisations that work with them. YACVic has worked for and with young Victorians and the services that support them for over 50 years.

Our vision is for a Victorian community in which all young people are valued as active participants, have their rights recognised and are treated fairly and with respect.

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Executive summary

Background, research aims and method

The current research will inform YACVic's work with the Victorian Government to further promote The Code and ensure ethical practice is embedded in all work that occurs with young people. Results are based on an online survey that was distributed widely in the youth sector.

Respondent overview

The sample is made up of 151 respondents and was considered a good representation of the sector with respect to type of qualification held, location of work, type or work role and nature of organisation representing. It is likely that workers with high levels of experience are overrepresented in the sample.

Challenges of working with young people

The youth work practice responsibilities deemed most challenging by respondents were 'looking after my own wellbeing'; 'recognising and responding to the impact of social context on young people's lives'; 'keeping my skills up to date'; and 'collaborating with others to achieve positive outcomes for young people'. The strategies most often used to deal with challenges faced were 'informal discussions with colleagues' and 'discuss with my direct line manager'.

Current use of The Code

Fifty six per cent of respondents reported using The Code in their work and 44 percent reported not using The Code in their work. Those who used The Code in their work reported using it in policy and program development, as a teaching tool, and to guide both individual and collective practice reflections. The things respondents found most useful about The Code included the way that it provides a reference point for defining and directing professional practice with young people; its clarity and accessibility; and the value of The Code as a framework practitioners can use to guide their practice.

Investing in The Code

A large portion of respondents who were not using The Code in their practice reported that they would be more likely to use it now that they were aware of it. Access to professional development and awareness raising activities were also cited

as things that would increase the likelihood of this group using The Code in the future. Professional development activities were also deemed the most valuable use of resources by respondents who are currently using The Code in their practice. The idea of developing companion resources to support organisations to use The Code was also well received. There is minimal support for updating or revising the document in any significant way.

Conclusions

The Code plays an important role in creating a collective identity for practitioners who work with young people and provides a framework through which the values of the discipline are taught, reinforced and enacted. It is suggested that the next phase of consultation is used to further draw out the findings of the survey and to gather more concrete case studies and examples of the way The Code is used to guide practice discussions and in policy development. This resulting data will inform the creation of tools to comprise *Code of Ethical Practice: A practical guide to implementation*. These materials will respond to survey respondents' requests for professional development, alongside reinforcement of duty of care, professional boundaries and strategies for responding to unethical behaviour.

Background, research aims and method

The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) published *Code of Ethical Practice – A First Step for the Victorian Youth Sector* (The Code) in 2007. The Code is based on a human rights framework and outlines principles and responsibilities to guide the practice of professionals who work with young people (YACVic 2007).

In 2014, YACVic and the Victorian Government Office for Youth will work with the Victorian youth sector to further promote The Code and ensure ethical practice is embedded in all work that occurs with young people. This report is based on the results of an online survey that was designed to collect information about who is using The Code and how. The survey aimed to inform a broad understanding of the needs of people who are working with young people in Victoria and provide a basis for further consultation. The knowledge gleaned through this process will ensure that the work YACVic does to build on The Code and support its further implementation is of most value to the sector.

The first section of the survey included five demographic questions and a question about how practitioners use The Code in their practice. Respondents were then directed to two different surveys based on whether or not they reported using The Code in their practice. Those who reported using The Code in their practice were asked questions about how they use it, what they value most about it, what parts they think could be improved and how they believe YACVic should target further work on The Code. Those who reported not using The Code in their practice were asked what YACVic could do to increase the likelihood that they would use it in the future. All respondents were asked about the degree to which they find elements of youth work practice challenging, the strategies that they use to deal with these challenges and the content they would find most helpful if YACVic were to develop companion resources to support implementation of The Code.

Respondent overview

One hundred and fifty-one complete responses were received to the online survey. The demographic make-up of the sample was as follows:

Qualifications

Thirty eight percent of the sample reported having, or currently working towards, a qualification in youth work; 61 percent reported having, or currently working towards, a qualification in a discipline other than youth work; and one percent reported having no formal post-secondary education.

Seventy four percent of the sample reported having a Bachelor's Degree or higher qualification; and twenty one percent reported having a Master's Degree or higher qualification.

The qualifications held by those who reported having a qualification in a discipline other than youth work included: education (n = 15); social work (n = 8); psychology/behavioural science (n = 8); management/business (n = 8); community services/welfare (n =8); alcohol and other drugs (n = 6); health (n = 6); community development (n = 5); arts (n = 3); social science (n =3); counselling (n = 2); disability (n = 2); theology (n = 2); evaluation (n = 1); marketing (n = 1); career development (n = 1); applied science (n = 1); children's services (n = 1); occupational therapy (n = 1); international development (n = 1); life coaching (n = 1); training & assessment (n = 1); and recreation (n = 1).

Nature of work role

Fifty two percent of the sample reported working directly with young people; 30 percent reported managing people who work directly with young people; and 18 percent reported not working with young people.

Forty one percent of the sample identified as youth workers.

Experience in the youth sector

Forty seven percent of the sample reported having worked in the youth sector for over 10 years; 38 percent reported having worked in the youth sector for between 5 and 10 years; seven percent reported having worked in the youth sector for between 3 and 5 years; 13 percent reported having worked in the youth sector for between 1 and 3 years; four percent reported having worked in the youth sector for less than 12 months; and four percent reported never having worked in the youth sector.

Geographical location

Fifty per cent of the sample reported that the majority of their work takes place in Metropolitan Melbourne; 17 percent reported that the majority of their work takes place on the urban fringe; 29 percent reported that the majority of their work takes place in a rural or regional area; and 4 percent reported that the majority of their work is state or nationwide.

Type of organisation

Forty eight percent of respondents reported working for not-for-profit organisations; 33 percent reported working for local government; 17 percent reported working for an educational institution; three percent reported working in state government; and three percent reported that they were not currently employed in the youth sector.

Use of The Code

Fifty six percent of the sample reported using The Code the in their work and 44 percent reported not using The Code in their work.

Twenty percent of the sample had not heard of The Code prior to taking part in the survey.

Use of demographic information in this report

This report will use the demographic information above in two ways. Firstly, it provides guidance as to the representativeness of the sample. The sample includes a good mix of respondents with youth work qualification and respondents with other types of qualifications. It also includes a good balance of people working directly with young people and managers of people who work directly with young people and of people working in the not-for-profit and local government sectors. Although half of the sample reported working in Metropolitan Melbourne, people working in rural and regional contexts and on the urban fringe are still well represented.

A concern arises with respect to the level of experience of the sample. Respondents reported extensive experience in the youth sector, with almost half working in the sector for over 10 years. The *National Snapshot of Youth Work* published by the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition in 2013 found that less than a quarter of

respondents (23.2%) had this level of experience.[1] This suggests that more experienced workers are overrepresented in the sample. The high level of experience in the sample can be seen as positive, in that this experience may aid respondents in identifying the needs of the sector. It is also potentially problematic, as the needs of less experienced workers are likely underrepresented.

The second way that the demographic information above will be used is to make comparisons between particular groups. This report seeks to identify differences in practice support needs based on:

- Respondent's use of The Code in their work (by comparing those who reported using The Code in their work with those who reported not using The Code in their work);
- Type of qualification held by respondents (by comparing those who reported having a qualification in youth work with those who did not report having a qualification in youth work); and
- Nature of organisation (by comparing responses of those who reported working in a not-for-profit organisation with those who reported working in local government).

These comparisons are noted throughout the report where they are deemed relevant, or where an interesting result emerged. They are not addressed for every question. All differences that are reported here have been found to be statistically significant at a minimum level of $p<0.05$. That is, for all differences reported, we can be at least 95 percent confident that the difference found in the sample also exists in the population the results are being generalised to.

## Challenges of working with young people

All respondents were provided with a list of challenges practitioners face in their work with young people, based on the youth work practice responsibilities outlined in The Code. They were then asked to rank each challenge on a continuum from 'not challenging' to 'extremely challenging'. Figure 1 shows the list of statements along

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[1] Reimer E 2013, *AYAC's National Snapshot of Youth Work*, Australian Youth Affairs Coalition, Surrey Hills, NSW.

with the percentage of respondents who ranked each statement 'often challenging' or 'sometimes challenging'.

Figure 1. Percentage of respondents who ranked youth work practice responsibilities as often challenging or sometimes challenging
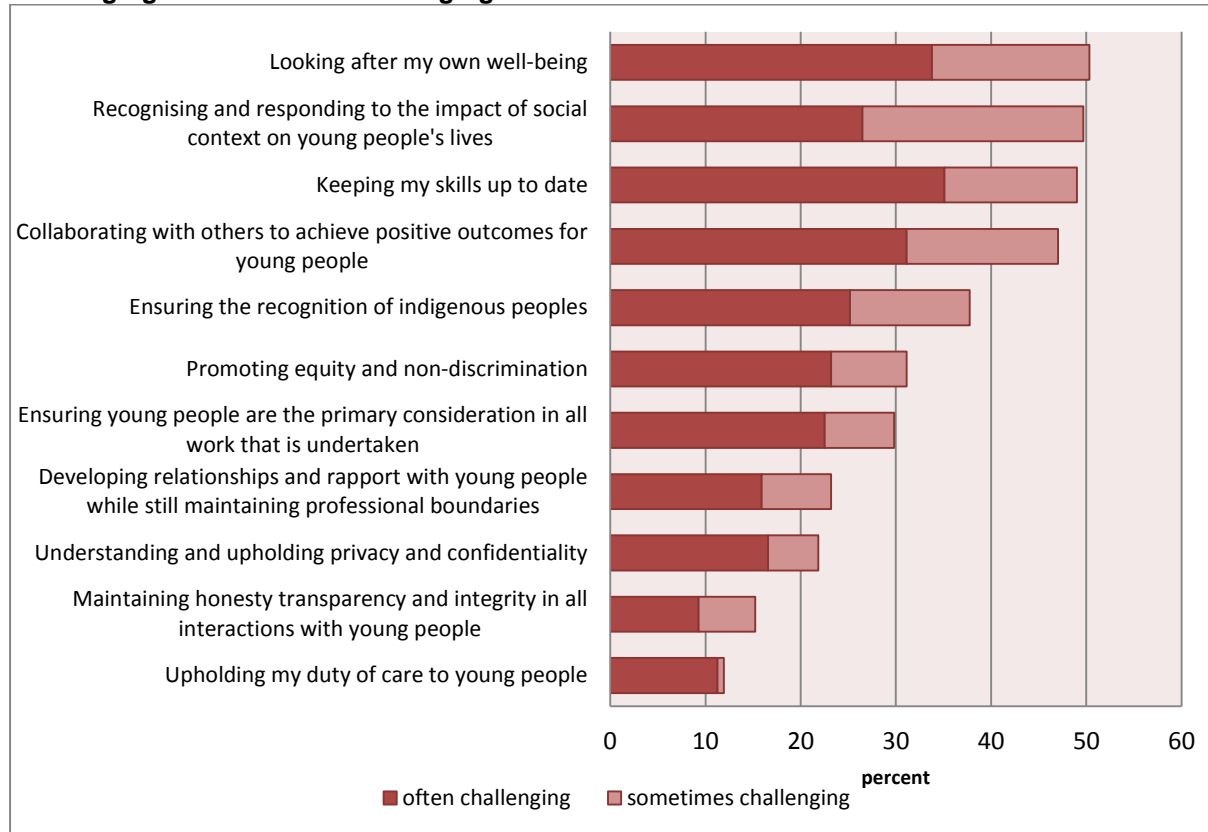
As demonstrated in Figure 1, the practice responsibilities deemed most challenging by respondents were 'looking after my own wellbeing'; 'recognising and responding to the impact of social context on young people's lives'; 'keeping my skills up to date'; and 'collaborating with others to achieve positive outcomes for young people'. Although these four challenges are presented in descending order in Figure 1, the differences between them are not large enough to be deemed significant[2]. Thus, all four can be considered as equally challenging to practitioners.

These four practice responsibilities were consistently ranked as challenging across the comparison groups. In fact, there were no notable significant differences found

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[2] Statistical significance tests revealed no significant difference between these four choices at either the .05 or .01 level.

across the comparison groups for this question[3]. This suggests that practitioners experience the challenges presented by the youth work practice responsibilities relatively equally, regardless of the type of organisation that they work for, the type of qualification they hold or whether or not they use The Code in their work.

Respondents were also asked an open-ended question about the other things that they find challenging in their work with young people. Responses included:

- Achieving good outcomes for young people with limited resources (n = 11);
- Dealing with unprofessional practice in the sector (both within own organisation and when working with external organisations, n = 10);
- Managing community perceptions or misinterpretations of the role of youth work (n = 4);
- Keeping up with and adapting to changes in the policy and funding landscape (n = 3).

The high number of respondents who reported self-care and keeping their skills up to date as often challenging or sometimes challenging is concerning. Further exploration of the nature of these challenges in the next phase of consultation would be valuable. Understanding and responding to the impact of social context and the ability to work collaboratively should also be kept in mind as areas where capacity building is required.

Respondents were given a list of potential strategies for dealing with challenges they face in their work and asked to select those that they use. There was no limit to the number of strategies that respondents were able to select. Figure 2 shows the percentage of respondents who reported using each strategy.

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[3] Only one statistically significant difference was found. Respondents who worked in local government were slightly more likely than respondents who worked in not-for profit organisations to report 'maintaining honesty transparency and integrity in all interactions with young people' as sometimes challenging or often challenging (p<.05). The overall number of respondents who reported finding this challenging was not large enough for this finding to be deemed important (10% in not-for profit organisations and 26% in local government).

Figure 2. Strategies utilised by respondents to deal with practice challenges[4]
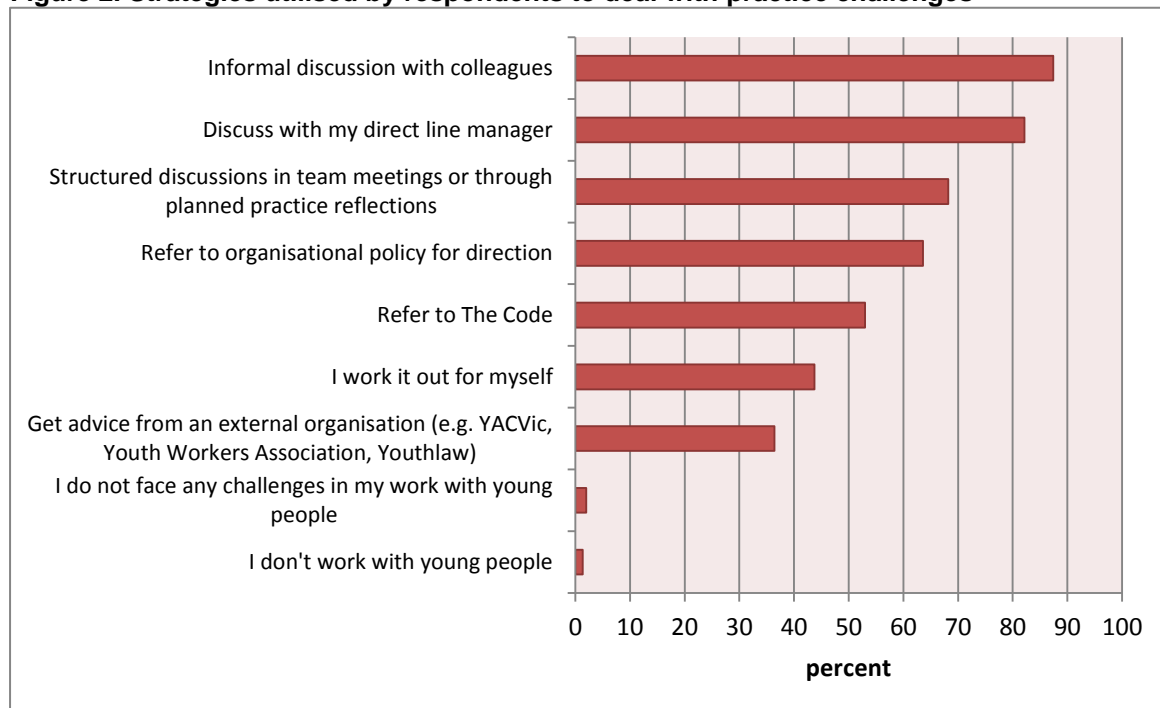
As Figure 2 demonstrates, the most common strategies respondents reported utilising to deal with challenges they face in their work were 'informal discussions with colleagues' and 'discuss with my direct line manager'. These two strategies were the most commonly reported across all of the comparison groups. There were, however, some differences in the extent to which practitioners utilised these and other strategies.

Respondents who reported using The Code in their work were less likely to rely on 'informal discussions with colleagues' as a strategy for dealing with challenges than respondents who reported that they did not use The Code in their work. Eighty one percent of those using The Code utilised this strategy and 95% of those not using The Code utilised this strategy[5]. Respondents who reported using The Code in their work were also more likely to 'refer to organisational policy for direction' than those who reported that they did not use The Code in their work. Seventy two percent of

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[4] Only respondents who reported using The Code in their work were given the option 'refer to The Code' therefore the percentage shown for this option is the percentage of those who reported using The Code who also reported 'refer to The Code' as a strategy they used to deal with practice challenges. For all other options the percentage shown is the percentage of the whole sample that reported using each strategy.

[5] $p < 0.05$

those who reported using The Code utilised this strategy and 53 percent of those who reported not using The Code utilised this strategy[6].

Respondents employed in local government were more likely than respondents employed in not-for-profit organisations to report getting 'advice from an external organisation' as a strategy for dealing with challenges they face in their work. Fifty percent of those employed in local government utilised this strategy and 28 percent of those employed in not-for-profit organisations utilised this strategy[7].

There were no significant differences in the utilisation of different strategies to deal with challenges between respondents who reported having youth work qualifications and respondents who did not report having youth work qualifications. This suggests that practitioners utilise similar strategies to deal with challenges they face in their work regardless of whether they hold a youth work qualification.

The heavy reliance on informal conversations with colleagues as a strategy for dealing with challenges is, at first glance, potentially concerning. A closer look at the data however, reveals that in the majority of cases respondents reported using this strategy *and* other strategies. Only three respondents reported using only informal discussions with colleagues to deal with challenges they face in their work. A further two respondents reported using both informal discussions with colleagues or 'work[ing] it out for themselves'. Further exploration of the role of informal discussions in supporting practitioners to deal with challenges in their work would be valuable. Specifically, are practitioners using informal discussions with colleagues alongside other strategies in most cases or are they relying solely on these discussions but only in some cases. Exploration of the contexts in which these discussions occur would also be valuable – particularly with respect to the question of whether practitioners are being paid for this work.

Understanding the challenges practitioners face in their practice, and the strategies they use to deal with these, provides helpful insight into the support that may be required. The findings reported in this section suggest that greater consideration of the ways in which practitioners support one another in their work roles is necessary.

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[6] $p < 0.05$
[7] $p < 0.05$

They suggest a need to increase the sector's capacity to support and learn from one another and to view these activities as a genuine part of the youth work role.

Current use of The Code

As noted above, 56 percent of respondents reported using The Code in their practice. Of these, 29 percent reported that 'the principles in The Code underpin all of my work'; 10 percent reported that they 'regularly refer to The Code to guide my practice or the practice of those I supervise'; and 13 percent reported that they 'sometimes refer to The Code to guide my practice or the practice of those I supervise'. Of the 44 percent of respondents who reported not using The Code in their practice, 24 percent reported that they were 'aware The Code exists but I don't use it in my practice' and 20 percent reported that they 'had not heard of The Code prior to taking part in this survey'.

Respondents employed in local government were significantly more likely to report utilising The Code in their work than respondents employed in not-for-profit organisations. Seventy percent of those employed in local government reported using The Code in their work and only 43 percent of those working in not-for-profit organisations reported using The Code in their work[8]. There was no difference in use of The Code between respondents with youth work qualifications and respondents without youth work qualifications.

Respondents who reported using The Code in their work were asked to provide examples of the way this occurred. Seventy-two responses were received to this question and these were grouped thematically. Many responses included reference to more than one strategy and, as a result, their response was grouped in more than one category. This process resulted in three dominant themes that were evident to a similar extent in the data and a fourth theme that was evident to a lesser extent. A further six responses were received that did not fit into a themed category.

The first of the dominant themes was the role of The Code as a basis for policy and program development. This appears to play out in several ways. In some instances, organisational policy is developed in line with the ideas outlined in The Code and this policy then guides the practice of workers. In other cases, organisational policy

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[8] p<0.01

refs to The Code and workers are required to refer directly to it as a practice guide. Others reported using The Code as a basis for the development of new programs and as part of policies with implications beyond the service itself (e.g. youth strategy, council plan) or as a tool to aid the monitoring and evaluation of programs. Finally, a small number of respondents reported using The Code in recruitment processes and position descriptions.

> It is in council's youth strategy to roll out the adoption of The Code for all Council staff and workers in the community.
>
> -survey respondent

The second dominant theme was the use of The Code as a tool to guide practice. Some respondents saw this as an unconscious process, describing The Code as an overarching framework that underpinned all of their practice without making any reference to specific ways in which this occurs. Others reported referring directly to the document as a tool to guide reflexive practice – both individually and in a team setting.

> A lot of the principles are second nature, however it is important to revisit from time to time. I find The Code is good to refer to if you are faced with an ethical dilemma.
>
> -survey respondent

The third dominant theme was the role of The Code as a learning and development tool. This included use in formal education settings, for training and inducting volunteers, placement students and new staff and in the supervision of more experienced workers. Across these settings The Code was seen as a valuable tool for ensuring work undertaken with young people is both consistent and of a high standard.

> …showing The Code to new workers and placement students, who were not youth workers (social workers) but were performing the function of youth work in their role. I was able to use The Code as a guide as to what should inform their ethical practice as it provided a 'standard' for them that was unambiguous.
>
> -survey respondent

The final theme that was evident, but to a lesser extent, was the way that The Code was useful in defining the youth work role and positioning it with relation to other disciplines.

> Working in a multi-disciplinary team (i.e. not all youth workers, but other professionals too), I refer to The Code to highlight the specifics of my role and practice and ethical responsibilities.

> For example, working with a family worker and coming up to a challenge, I was able to refer to The Code to highlight that ethically, young people need to be my primary consideration and in some particular instances it was inappropriate for me to work with a family, as it had not been endorsed by the young person.
>
> -survey respondent

Respondents who reported using The Code in their practice were also asked an open-ended question about what they found most useful about it. The sixty five responses were analysed thematically and tagged with key words. There was no limit to the number of key words an individual response could be tagged with. For example, a response such as 'easy to read, simple concepts, has young people at the heart of it', was tagged with the key words 'clear', 'accessible', and 'young person centred'. This process resulted in 117 individual ideas being elicited from the 65 responses. Of these, the three things most commonly cited as useful were:

- The provision of a reference point for defining professional practice with young people (n = 20);
- The clarity (n = 20) and accessibility (n = 12) of the document; and
- The value of The Code as a framework practitioners can use to guide their practice (n = 13).

Thinking about the way practitioners are currently using The Code, and the things that they find most useful about it, provides a solid basis from which to think about how commitment to The Code can be strengthened. Practitioners identified strongly with The Code as a document that defines youth work. They also saw it as a practical tool to drive policy and program development and guide both individual and collective practice responses. Further detail about specific processes for incorporating The Code into organisational policy and concrete examples of how it is used to guide practice discussions would be useful in developing case studies to support those who are not already using The Code in this way. Exploration of the role of local government in supporting and promoting implementation of The Code across local government areas (as described by the respondent above) would also be worthwhile.

Investing in The Code
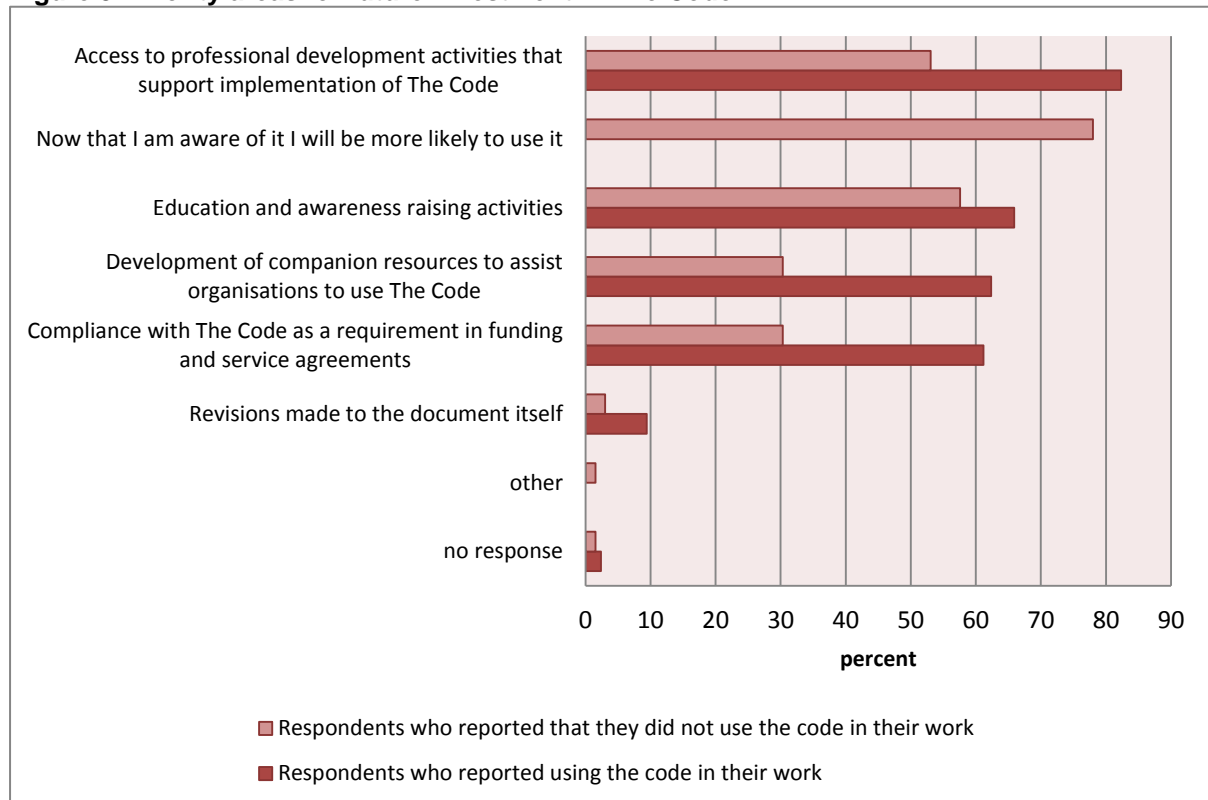
Respondents who reported not using The Code in their work were asked what work YACVic could do to increase the likelihood that they would use The Code in the

future. In addition, respondents who reported using The Code were asked where they would like YACVic to invest resources with relation to The Code. The response options were the same, with the exception of 'now that I am aware of The Code I will be more likely to use it', which was only an option for respondents who reported not using The Code in their work. Responses from both groups are shown together in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Priority areas for future investment in The Code

As can be seen in Figure 3, for respondents who were using The Code in their work, 'access to professional development activities that support the implementation of The Code' was deemed the most valuable use of resources. There was no significant difference in the value attributed to the other options for this group, with the exception of 'revisions made to the document itself' which was deemed a valuable use of resources by only nine percent of respondents.

The most common response from respondents who were not already using The Code in their practice was 'now that I am aware of it I will be more likely to use it'. 'Education and awareness raising activities' and 'access to professional development activities that support the implementation of The Code' also rated highly as things that would increase use of The Code.

Respondents who were employed in local government were more likely than respondents employed in not-for-profit organisations to attribute value to: 'development of companion resources to assist organisations to use The Code'[9]; 'access to professional development activities that support the implementation of The Code'[10]; and 'compliance with The Code in funding and service agreements'[11]. There was no difference in the value attributed to the activities between respondents with qualifications in youth work and respondents with no qualifications in youth work.

Only a small number of respondents suggested that making revisions to the document itself would increase the likelihood of them using The Code or was a valuable use of resources (10% of the complete sample). Those who suggested revisions to the document were asked what changes they would like to see. Suggestions included:

- Changes to the layout and delivery of information (specific suggestions included: making it more visual; using colour and real images from real youth work agencies; a user friendly format and plain English; and making it look more like a code of practice and less like a workbook);
- Changes to the content (specific suggestions included: greater clarification of the youth work role; more focus on self-care as an ethical responsibility; adding an additional statement to recognise the needs of more marginalised young people; and reducing the number of principles through combining some, so that they are punchy and memorable); and
- Ensuring that it is still in line with current legislation.

All respondents who reported using The Code in their practice were also asked a more general question about whether there were any parts of The Code that they thought could be improved. Forty-eight responses were received and the most common suggestions included:

- Providing more examples (n = 7);
- Development of a snapshot or poster style version (n = 4);

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[9] $p<0.01$
[10] $p<0.05$
[11] $p<0.05$

- Making it clearer (n = 4); and
- Increasing accountability to the document (n = 4).

Eleven of the 45 responses to this question indicated that there were not parts of The Code that they thought could be improved and a further five said that they were unsure how it could be improved.

All respondents were provided with a list of things that could potentially be included in companion resources to The Code and asked to rank them on a continuum from 'not helpful' to 'extremely helpful'. Figure 4 shows the list of options and the percentage of respondents who rated each one 'extremely helpful' or 'quite helpful'.

Figure 4. Elements deemed 'extremely helpful' or 'quite helpful' in a companion resource to The Code
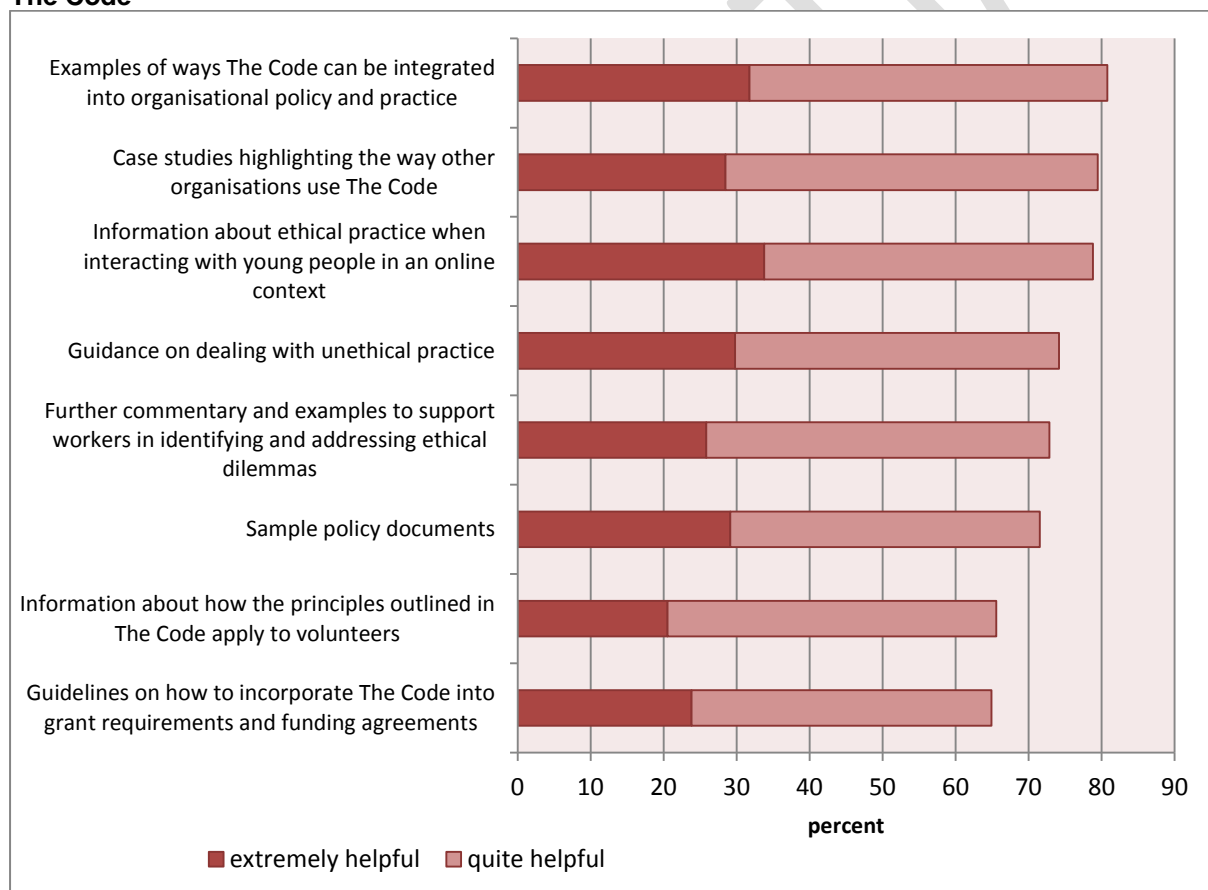
As Figure 4 demonstrates, all of the listed elements were deemed either 'extremely helpful' or 'quite helpful' by over 60 percent of respondents. The high number of participants that deemed all elements to be helpful makes it difficult to make distinctions between them. 'Examples of the way The Code can be integrated into organisational policy and practice'; 'case studies highlighting the way other

organisations use The Code'; and 'information about ethical practice when interacting with young people online' were all deemed more helpful than 'Information about how the principles outlined in The Code apply to volunteers' and 'guidelines on how to incorporate The Code into grant requirements and funding agreements'[12]. Otherwise there was no significant difference between the options.

Respondents were also asked what other things they would like to see in companion resources to The Code. Ten responses were received and suggestions included:

- A statutory requirement that The Code will be implemented across organisations, including health and education, by a certain date;
- Examples of how The Code can be implemented (specific suggestions included the development of video content, self-care resources, and guidance specific to local government);
- Discussion of the challenges the 'bounded' role described in The Code presents for culturally diverse and indigenous youth workers who are active community members outside of their professional role;
- An online forum for workers to discuss ethical issues relating to using The Code; and
- Commentary on how youth participation relates to The Code.[13]

Several conclusions can be drawn from participant's ideas about further investment in The Code. Firstly, The Code remains relevant to the sector and there is minimal support for updating or revising the document in any significant way. Secondly, development of support resources was received positively (particularly with relation to the provision of further commentary and more concrete implementation examples), as was access to professional development – particularly for those who are not currently using The Code in their practice. This suggests that, to be most effective, any resource development should be framed in the context of professional development. Thirdly, responses do not support the idea that access to resources considering ethical practice in a volunteering context is a high priority for the sector. Fourthly, there appears to be some support for increasing accountability to The Code.

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[12] All were statistically significant at the .01 level with the exception of the difference between 'online' and 'volunteers' which was significant at the .05 level.
[13] All responses have been paraphrased in the interest of brevity.

Conclusions

This research has found that The Code is a key document for the Victorian youth sector. It plays an important role in creating a collective identity for practitioners who work with young people and provides a framework through which the values of the discipline are taught, reinforced and enacted. Increasing use of The Code across the sector will require an ongoing commitment to awareness raising and professional development activities. This work can and should occur with The Code in its current form as the research found little support for making revisions to the document itself.

Along with training activities, the idea of developing companion resources to support implementation of The Code was received positively. Some initial ideas to inform the development of these resources can be gleaned directly through suggestions that were made. These include:

- The development of a poster/snapshot version of The Code that can be easily displayed at services; and
- Further commentary, case studies, and examples to draw out some of the more complex elements of The Code.

Areas for further exploration were also identified through analysis of the elements of practice that were deemed the most challenging for participants. The high number of respondents who noted keeping their skills up to date and self-care as challenging is concerning. It is impossible however to derive a meaningful plan of action based on this data alone. Further exploration of the nature of these challenges is essential in understanding how they may be overcome and the role YACVic's work on The Code may play in this. A related area for further exploration exists with respect to the high reliance on informal support. It is possible that the informal collegial exchanges reported in the survey present valuable learning and development opportunities but are simply not perceived as serving this function. They may also play a valuable role in self-care, provided they are approached in a constructive manner and occur as a recognised component of the work role.

Recognising and responding to the impact of social context on young people's lives also rated highly as an area respondents found challenging. There is potential for YACVic to build sector capacity in this area through partnering with organisations

with specific expertise to deliver training and develop resources (e.g. Council to Homeless Persons, CREATE Foundation, Australian Drug Foundation, Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, Domestic Violence Resource Centre of Victoria, etc.).

Consequently, YACVic recommends that the next phase of consultation builds on the survey findings by:

- gathering more concrete examples of ways in which The Code is used to guide practice discussions and in policy development;
- seeking to better understand the nature of self-care and access to learning and development as practice challenges and explores avenues through which the project may address these challenges;
- exploring the role of informal collegial support in more depth with the view to considering the way these activities fit within the youth work role; and
- exploring the potential of a role for local government representatives in encouraging and supporting implementation of The Code across their local government areas.

This resulting data will inform the creation of tools to comprise the *Code of Ethical Practice: A practical guide to implementation*. These materials will respond to survey respondents' requests for professional development, alongside reinforcement of duty of care, professional boundaries and strategies for responding to unethical behaviour.

Code of Ethical Practice – A second step for the Victorian youth sector

Report on Phase 2 of consultation

April 2014

The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria

The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) is a vibrant, member based organisation that represents and advocates for young people and the organisations that work with them. YACVic has worked for and with young Victorians and the services that support them for over 50 years.

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Background, aims and methods

In 2014, the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) and the Victorian Government Office for Youth (OfY) worked with the Victorian youth sector on a project to further promote the Code of Ethical Practice (the Code). Phase 1 consultation took place between December 2013 and February 2014, via an online survey designed to collect information about use of the Code. Phase 2 consultation occurred in March and April 2014, to:

- further draw out the findings of the Phase 1 survey;
- gather examples of the way the Code is used to guide practice discussions and in policy development;
- research and test tools and other materials that would be useful to assist organisations in embedding ethical practice into all work that occurs with young people.

Phase 2 consultation was via:

- Three focus groups – one in a metropolitan Melbourne area (Footscray), one in a regional Victorian area (Ballarat) and one in an 'urban-fringe' area (Pakenham) – co-facilitated by YACVic and OfY and attended by participants representing a broad representation of youth sector roles and settings.
- One-to-one interviews with key sector stakeholders, including representatives from the Victorian Government, local government agencies, and not-for-profit organisations.

Focus groups were informed by suggestions for draft project materials, made by the project reference group:

- some kind of 'Code-support toolkit';
- practical templates and documents that might be used in supervision, team meeting, or recruitment practices;
- guidance for embedding the Code in funding or partnership agreements;
- prompts to use the Code, including 'conversation cards' and a poster promoting the Code and the Youth Work Practice Responsibilities;

- support in dealing with unethical practice, including advice about where/how to get assistance.

Focus groups

Location and partners

YACVic and OfY conducted three consultation sessions across Victoria, with the assistance of three local government areas:

- Metropolitan: City of Maribyrnong (Phoenix Youth Centre, Footscray) - 1st April, 12pm - 2pm
- Regional: City of Ballarat (Ballarat Library) - 7th April, 2pm - 4pm
- Urban Fringe: Cardinia Shire (Pakenham Hall) - 8th April, 12pm - 2pm

The consultation sessions were promoted widely through YACVic, OfY and relevant local government area networks.

Attendance

In total, 67 professionals from the youth sector participated in the sessions. The sector was represented well at each location:

- Metropolitan session - 30 participants
- Urban fringe session - 24 participants
- Regional session - 13 participants

Participants varied in their roles within the sector and their level of seniority. There was a balance between professionals from specialist and generalist services.

Participant roles	Participant settings
- CEO / Director / Manager - Human Resources - Policy and Research - Community Planning	- Youth Services - Family Services - Youth Justice - Drug and Alcohol

- Team Leader - Case Manager - Outreach Worker - Youth Worker - Program Coordinator - Partnership Broker - School Nurse - Community Liaison - Youth Engagement - Youth Work Student	- Employment - Education - Mentoring - Multi-cultural - State government - Local government - Not-for-profit

Structure

Focus group consultation prioritised the following areas:

- youth work practice responsibilities (YWPRs) deemed most challenging by respondents to the Phase 1 survey,
- duty of care, professional boundaries and core values,
- formal and informal collegial support, coaching, and professional development,
- self-care for those working with young people, and
- strategies for responding to unethical behaviour.

Focus groups were broken into two sections: Part A: Challenging youth work practice responsibilities, and Part B: Potential tools to enhance and support use of the Code.

Part A: Challenging youth work practice responsibilities

Participants were asked to reflect on three youth work practice responsibilities listed in the Code of Ethical Practice, deemed most challenging by respondents to Phase 1 survey:

- social context,
- cooperation and collaboration,
- knowledge, skills and self-care.

Participants were then encouraged to consider how using the Code might help overcome these challenges.

Social Context

In line with Phase 1 of the Code consultation, participants across all three consultation sessions agreed they found it challenging to respond to the impact of social and structural forces of young people's lives. Key issues identified were:

- the complexity and changing nature of social context;
- understanding the multiple barriers and community needs facing young people; geographical boundaries;
- a broad age range of 'youth', from 12 to 25;

- a gap in services for 8 to 12 year olds.

Time and resourcing constraints were cited as major factors contributing to the challenge of deconstructing social context. Practitioners reported this took considerable time with new clients and most felt they were working in timeframes that did not allow enough space to clearly identify barriers for a young person and achieve the milestones set out by management / funding criteria.

> *"Limited timeframes limit getting to know their social context. [We] can sometimes only achieve smaller goals in the times frames" – Pakenham participant.*

Participants identified the Code as being useful to highlight the importance of understanding and responding to the impact of social context in young people's lives. Some participants suggested that the Code could be used in this way to advocate for services and outcomes that best meet the needs of young people. Similarly, it was felt the Code could also be used to negotiate ethical partnership arrangements between services or agencies. In one example given, Maribyrnong Youth Services explained how they referenced the Code in their building hire agreement with external agencies.

Cooperation and Collaboration

Although cooperation and collaboration were identified as key challenges in Phase 1 consultations, Phase 2 focus groups participants actually felt the youth sector often worked in greater partnership than other areas of the community sector. However, the focus groups did still identify unique challenges in this area:
- finding the 'right' partners, with compatible values and a compatible approach to work;
- balancing collaboration with external services with competition with those services;
- high staff turn-over, meaning relationships between services had to be re-developed.

While partnerships were viewed as a good way to pool resources and expertise, points of tension were setting joint priorities and merging ways of working. Some organisations were already using the Code to help navigate this tension and many agreed that the Code could be used to mediate opposing views and to help challenge unethical behaviour:

"[The Code] gives us a guideline / starting point" – Footscray participant.

"[The Code] provides good substance to back up what we do" – Ballarat participant.

Participants identified a difference between collaboration on a 'ground' level and at management level: comments were made that frontline staff were often more open to collaboration, providing collegial support and focusing on the needs of young people. Management were seen to think more strategically about collaboration, prioritising the the needs of their organisation: being wary of issues like intellectual property, reporting and funding.

Knowledge, Skills and Self-Care

Practices around self-care and approaches to professional development varied widely among participants. There was general agreement that these were key areas for improvement. Lack of time and resources were cited as the main challenges to access professional development. Participants in Ballarat identified time, travel, accommodation and expense as being a significant barriers to rural professionals accessing relevant professional development. Webinars were considered useful when available. However, they were recognised as lacking a face-to-face networking component.

Most participants felt that good supervision and support from a line manager was essential to their self-care. Many favoured external supervision and/or access to an employee assistance program. Having adequate support to deal with critical incidents was also seen as essential. Participants felt they wanted

strong managerial support on this issue, and that managers should 'lead by example':

> *"Good supervision means the supervisor is well versed in the Code of Ethical Practice" – Pakenham participant.*

Working after business hours and on weekends were challenges to maintaining good work-life balance. This was reported as particularly problematic for small programs that rely on one key member of staff. Inadequate penalty rates or time-in-lieu arrangements were also highlighted.

Maintaining professional boundaries was considered a key part of self-care.

> *"It's hard to clarify boundaries when doing outreach; [it's] difficult to 'turn off', separate work and home, difficult to be realistic in what we can offer young people as we value them so much" – Pakenham participant.*

> *"[The Code] provides self-awareness of own practice" – Ballarat participant.*

> *"Using the Code, local government and non-government organisations need to be clear of self-care" – Footscray participant*

Part B – Potential tools to enhance and support use of the Code

Participants were asked think about how the Code could be more actively used in day-to-day practice. Participants critiqued a set of draft tools that had been developed by YACVic in response to suggestions from the Code project reference group (see Appendix A).

These draft tools were:

1. Organisational statements of commitment to the Code;
2. Suggestions for recruitment and induction processes;
3. Conversation cards / ethical scenarios;
4. Supervision templates;
5. Suggestions for encouraging youth ownership of the Code.

Participants were also asked to suggest additional tools they might find useful.

Tool 1: Statement of Commitment to work within the Code

This tool provided organisations with two alternate statements that could be used to outline their organisations commitment to working with the Code.

Feedback

Participants indicated they would use this tool and gave preference to the shorter statement. Support from senior management for the statement was of particular concern for some participants.

There was consensus among participants that organisations would need to adopt a suite of Code tools in order for it to be effective. It was strongly suggested that management teams would need to be enthusiastic about Code implementation and that organisations must make a real commitment to the Code and not simply use it as a 'tick-box' exercise.

> *"It really comes down to agencies adopting the code into everyday practice guidelines" – Ballarat participant.*

Some participants felt it could be challenging to implement the Code in organisations where some practitioners work with young people in a non-youth work role:

> *"[In] Multidisciplinary teams [there are] tensions between frameworks that workers are driven to work to" – Ballarat participant.*

For example, a family services worker stated it was not always possible for them to put the needs of the young person first where the parent is their primary client. A school nurse said they would need to consider guidelines from the nursing association and the Department for Education and Early Childhood Development the as well as the Code. A mentoring coordinator highlighted she would work to national benchmarks for youth mentoring, national standards for volunteering, and the Code. These discussions seemed to uncover a hesitation to work under multiple frameworks and navigate nuances.

Participant suggestions

Participants suggested that an organisation could make a statement of commitment via:

- its websites, social media, newsletters;
- verbal announcements at events;
- posters in youth venues;
- funding applications;
- its youth policy or youth strategy;
- partnership agreements or memorandums of understanding;
- procedural documentation, like intake forms;
- organisational policies, including complaints and HR processes.

It was suggested a statement could sit alongside an image, logo or 'stamp' representing the Code. This visual element could be then be used on websites, on documents, as a sticker, on posters etc. As such, this was suggested as forming an accreditation process:

"A Code symbol could be linked to accreditation from YACVic" – *Pakenham participant.*

"YACVic could carry out an audit each year so the organisation keeps their accreditation" – *Maribyrnong participant.*

Further to accreditation, some focus group participants felt the Code should be mandated for youth organisations:

> *"[the Code] needs more teeth. [It] needs to be embedded more in organisations"* – Ballarat participant.

However, it was recognised that either of these options would require further sector consultation and ongoing resources.

Other organisational tools were suggested as:
- a guide for organisation on implementing an 'ethical champion' to promote the Code throughout the workplace;
- an annual report template to help an organisation show how they have implemented ethical practice throughout the year;
- guidance on linking the Code to an organisation's action plan / business plan.

Tool 2: Suggestions for recruitment and induction processes

This tool suggested ways that the Code could be used throughout the recruitment process including: position descriptions, job interviews, contracts and induction.

Feedback

Participants felt that referencing the Code throughout the recruitment process was reasonable and achievable. Some found it appealing that staff members would be 'bound' to the Code through their position description and contract, and that this would give leverage to managers when dealing with unethical behaviour from staff.

Participant suggestions

Participants felt this tool would be suitable and useful for recruitment and induction of both paid staff and volunteers. While this was agreed as important for induction, there was general consensus that ongoing training or professional development

workshops around the Code would additionally reinforce staff / volunteer understanding of, and commitment to the Code.

Tool 3: Conversation cards / ethical scenarios

This tool gave scenarios describing ethical challenges a youth worker might face. Each scenario provided prompt questions to encourage the reader to think about ethics, their youth work practice responsibilities and how they might provide collegial advice and support.

Feedback

The cards were well-liked, described as "thought-provoking" and "very useful". Participants thought the cards could be used:

- in one-to-one supervision;
- in peer learning / group supervision sessions or team meetings;
- in interagency meetings;
- as part of induction and recruitment processes;
- as icebreakers at conferences, forums or workshops;
- as part of training for mentors or volunteers;
- in discussion with youth work students on work placements.

Participant suggestions

Participants suggested that scenarios should vary in their complexity and should appeal to a range of staff. They should include simple situations that are more likely to come up in day-to-day interactions with young people. Cards that focus on boundaries between workers and young people were seen as particularly useful. It was felt that the cards should assist managers in guiding the discussion to cover the correct elements.

Tool 4: Supervision templates

This tool outlined way the Code could be used to prompt discussion about the Code in both individual and group supervision sessions.

Feedback

Some participants stated they would find difficult to make time to include the discussion points in this tool in supervision or team meetings, as client issues and other agenda items would take precedence. Others suggested it would be important for this tool to make sure staff did not feel like they were being 'tested'. Additionally, it was felt that only managers / supervisors trained in youth work would be able to use this tool to give youth work specific supervision.

Some participants indicated they would be more likely to use supervision tools in a group setting, where it might be seen as a team activity to give a variety of answers.

Tool 5: Suggestions for encouraging youth ownership of the Code

This tool asked participants how the Code could be made more relevant to young people, in an interactive and culturally appropriate way.

Feedback

Participants strongly expressed the need for young people to be involved in the development of any type of tool that is aimed at engaging young people with the code. Pakenham participants argued that this would be a sizable project that would need to be 'well-funded' in order get a wide variety of views from young people.

Participants agreed that information about the Code for young people should:
- be presented in a visually engaging way, using bright and colourful graphics;
- use simple language, written as though speaking directly to the young person;
- have a digital component.

There was some discussion about the wording in the Code being too 'clunky' for a youth-specific poster and possibly too complex for some young people to engage with. A 'youth-friendly' version of the Code was suggested: a condensed poster or small brochure seen as more appealing than a full booklet.

Ad with the previous 'accreditation' suggestion for Tool 1, a Code symbol, image or sticker was suggested to make young people aware of the organisation's use of Code. However, some participants warned that stickers could be seen as tokenistic if young people weren't consulted properly about their design and use.

With regards to making the Code more culturally appropriate to young people, it was suggested that the Code, or a Code poster, could be presented in different languages. In any English-language materials, simple text and pictures could help engage those young people who do not speak English as a first language.

Participants also suggested that young people might become more familiar with the Code if using it when setting parameters for their engagement with an organisation, either in a case-management setting or at a group event where rules of participation were drawn up.

Participant suggestions for additional resources:

(i)   Professional development and training:
- More YACVic workshops about the Code
- A forum for young people and workers about the Code.

(ii)   Promotion and awareness-raising:

- A wallet-card that explains key elements of the Code.
- A poster summarising the youth work practice responsibilities.
- An information pack or training for teachers, school councils and SRCs on the Code.

- A forum for young people and workers about the Code.
- An online forum for young people to ask about ethics.

(iii)   Guidance to include the Code in contracting, funding and partnership agreements:

- An information sheet explaining the Code to potential funders.
- A sample statement about the Code to be included in Memorandums of Understanding.

(iv)   Guidance that highlights how the Code can be used as an advocacy tool for a young person, staff member or organisation to lobby for better conditions or raise ethical concerns.

(v)   A resource that outlines practical examples relating to each youth work practice responsibility.

One-to-one interviews

One-to-one interviews were conducted with eight key youth sector stakeholders (seven members of the Code project reference group and one academic).The following themes emerged:

Challenging unethical behaviour

It was felt the Code should be used to promote consistent 'good' (i.e. ethical) practice among paid staff and volunteers. Guidance should be given on where people working with young people can get support in dealing with unethical practice, e.g. "What happens if someone has made me feel uncomfortable? How do we address this?". One interviewee also felt that any final Code project product should also communicate that doing nothing to challenge unethical behaviour is as bad as acting unethically.

However, concerns were raised that the Code should not be used to encourage practitioners to become "the ethical police" or encourage colleagues to "dob-in" each other. Similarly, there may be a danger the Code could be misused by mangers to discipline staff.

Interviewees' preferences were to create neutral, group spaces to discuss ethical dilemmas, e.g. team meetings, group supervision, or 'Code working days'. Collegial tensions could be handled through correct management channels and proper supervision processes.

Staff supervision

The Code can support paid staff and volunteers if formalised into supervision processes, e.g. as a supervision template or standing agenda item.

Education settings

Although the Code was seen as being a core part of youth work education in university settings, there was less confidence about consistent use of the Code in TAFE or Registered Training Organisation (RTO) settings.

Professional development and continuous learning

The Code can be used as a basis for staff/volunteer professional development and continuous learning. Interviewees working in Local Government settings gave examples of how they had embedded the Code in staff professional development procedures and performance appraisals.

One interviewee gave an example of how the Code has been adapted into staff induction processes and volunteer training program.

Prompts and reminders

Conversation cards – scenarios containing ethical dilemmas – can be used to prompt collegial debate about the YWPRs. These cards should contain 'real-world' examples, which deliberately 'grey' so users would have to think through the Code to use them.

A poster outlining the Youth Work Practice Responsibilities and promoting use of the Code was generally popular among interviewees. As well as acting as a highly-visible prompt, a poster could help define a 'youth work space' and better present youth work ideals to the public or other professions. One person did, however, state they felt posters to be a "thing of the past" and another cautioned about a potentially limited lifespan if it was updated. These interviewees were keen for any printed materials to also be available in electronic format.

Stickers were suggested as other means to raise awareness of the Code and prompt people to use it.

Youth ownership

Several interviewees asked how the Code can be better represented for a youth audience.

Organisational commitment to the Code

Encouraging organisational commitment to the code was widely popular. Suggestions included senior management champions and public organisational statements. It was suggested that a final product target a number of resources to those at management and/or coordinator level. One interviewee expressed concern

that in focusing too much on individual youth workers' responsibilities, we lose sight of the necessity for organisations to also take responsibility to commit to the code.

Wording of the Code

Several interviewees expressed strong satisfaction with the existing wording of the code, e.g.

> *"I'm really happy with the Code, it doesn't need to change" – one-to-one interviewee.*

> *"I love the Code!" – one-to-one interviewee.*

No interviewee requested changes to the Code.

Two existing parts of the Code were identified as areas that a Code-support toolkit could highlight:

- Rationale for the Code's human rights approach, i.e. the philosophical underpinning of UN Convention of the Rights of the Child and relevant legislative base in Victoria (2005 Child, Youth and Families Act; Victorian Charter of Human Rights).
- The youth worker's commitment that the young person is at the centre of the work they do.

A simple product

Several interviewees recommended that whatever the final product is, it should be simple and easy to use. Branding can be consistent across several product materials, e.g. poster, stickers, conversation cards. While core messages will be youth-work specific, they must be understood across multiple workplaces. There was also recognition that the majority of people working with young people may not have a youth work qualification. The final product should also signpost users to, rather than duplicate, existing, comprehensive guidance (e.g. Youthlaw's 'What do I do when?' publication; the original Code document).

Conclusions and recommendations

Consistent with Phase 1 consultations, interviewees and focus group participants in Phase 2 consultations were generally happy with the current wording of the Code. Specific exceptions to this were concerns about making the language of the Code more accessible to young people – a 'youth-friendly' version was suggested to properly address this.

Participants identified three levels of youth sector responsibility to commit to, and understand the Code:

(i)   individual practitioner;

(ii)   manager / coordinator;

(iii)   senior management / organisation.

At an individual practitioner level, it was felt the Code the Code could be used to:

- highlight the importance of understanding, and respond to, the impact of social context on young people's lives;
- advocate for services and outcomes that best meet the needs of young people;
- negotiate ethical partnership or arrangements between services or agencies;
- navigate tension between services, mediate opposing views and agree a consistent approach to ethical behaviour;
- highlight the importance of continuous learning and self-care.

At management / coordinator level, participants clearly indicated a desire for supervisors to promote the Code and use it to support their staff to address challenging youth work practice responsibilities. It was suggested that supervisors could do this by:

- 'leading by example';
- incorporating the Code into staff/ volunteer recruitment and induction processes;
- integrating the Code into staff/ volunteer supervision processes.

At senior management / organisational level, participants felt it was important for organisations to commit to the Code, through:

- internal policies and procedures,
- public declarations;
- leadership from senior 'champions'.

In doing this, organisations, and their leaders, must recognise the need for employees to have time and resources to address the youth work practice responsibilities (knowledge, skills and self-care were highlighted). Organisations employing practitioners working with young people in non-youth work roles may face additional challenges in negotiating the Code to be used among all staff. Participants also felt there was a need for a more 'youth-friendly' version of the Code, produced in consultation with young people.

To support their use of the Code, focus group participants welcomed the set of draft tools presented to them, which had been developed through one-to-one interviews with key youth sector stakeholders.

In addition, it should be recognised that excellent partnership work between YACVic and OfY to plan and co-facilitate the focus groups contributed to engaging and productive sessions. The focus groups were also highly successful opportunities to promote the Code and the wider work of YACVic and OfY.

Based upon the above findings, YACVic makes the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1

That a combination of concise, printed and electronic materials be produced to support and embed further use of the Code, which:

- offer relevant, useful guidance at all levels of organisations;
- use clear, straightforward language;
- raise public and practitioner awareness of the Code;
- do not replicate or duplicate existing guidance (specifically, the original Code of Ethical Practice document and Youthlaw's 'What do I do when?'

publication. New resources should instead signpost users to any existing guidance).

Recommendation 2

That a magazine-style toolkit be produced, to comprise:

- a poster that promotes use of the Code and clarifies the youth work practice responsibilities with practical examples;

- a small set of Conversation Cards / ethical scenarios, further illustrating correct application of the Code;

- printed guidance for practitioners, managers and organisations:

  - guidance for practitioners:
    - a brief introduction to the Code, highlighting its human rights framework;
    - an explanation of the Youth Work Practice Responsibilities, incorporating practical / case study examples and prompt questions;
    - information about how to raise concerns about unethical behaviour.

  - guidance for managers / coordinators:
    - how to include the Code in staff recruitment, induction and supervision processes;
    - how to integrate the Code in contracting, funding and partnership agreements.

  - guidance for senior managers / organisations:
    - suggestions for creating an organisational commitment to the Code
    - Encouraging a whole-of-organisation approach to using the Code

Recommendation 3

That each section of the printed toolkit signpost users to a suite of electronic documents, to be hosted on the YACVic website, comprising:

- a Code implementation matrix for organisations;
- staff / volunteer supervision templates;
- recruitment and induction templates;
- example organisational statements of commitment;
- funding agreement and contracting templates.

Recommendation 4

That YACVic and OfY undertake further work to address issues raised by Phase 2 consultations that are currently outside the scope of this project:

(i) the need for increased training and professional development opportunities about the Code for the Victorian youth sector;

(ii) the potential of a 'Code-accreditation' process for organisations;

(iii) how a 'youth-friendly' version of the Code might be developed.

Appendix A – draft tools presented at focus groups

1. Organisational statements of commitment to the Code

Statement 1

"[Name of organisation] commits to working ethically with young people. We have adopted the YACVic Code of Ethical Practice."

Statement 2

"[Name of organisation] commits to working ethically with young people and adopts the following Practice Responsibilities from the YACVic Code of Ethical Practice:
- Recognition of Indigenous People
- Young People as the Primary Consideration
- Duty of Care
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Boundaries
- Transparency, Honesty and Integrity
- Social Context
- Cooperation and Collaboration
- Knowledge, Skills and Self-Care."

Questions:

- Do you think organisations should make a statement of commitment to work within the Code?

- How would you word a statement of commitment to work within the Code?

How else could an organisation publically demonstrate its commitment to the Code?

2. Suggestions for recruitment and induction processes

Position descriptions
Position descriptions should include reference to the following:

- *Key selection criteria:*

A demonstrated commitment to working ethically with young people, as defined by the YACVic Code of Ethical Practice.

- *Supervision, reporting and accountability:*

[This position] will participate in regular supervision to discuss ethical dilemmas and responses to unethical behaviour, as guided by the YACVic Code of Ethical Practice.

Interviews
Interview candidates should be presented with a copy of the Code to review before, and during, the interview. The following question should be asked:

[This organisation] commits to working with the Code of Ethical Practice. Pick one of the youth work practice responsibilities that you most identify with, and explain why this is a core part of your work.

Contracts
Contracts for all positions working with young people should include the following line:

- *Ethical practice*:

The employee is expected to work to the principles and practice responsibilities set out by the YACVic Code of Ethical Practice.

Induction kit
A copy of the YACVic Code of Ethical Practice should be included in an induction kit for all new employees.

Questions:

- Should employees be compelled to work towards the Code's principles and practice responsibilities?

- What do you think of the inclusions above?

- How could new (or prospective) employees be made more aware of the organisation's commitment on the Code?

3. Conversation cards / ethical scenarios

Card 1

David
David is 17. He's been clean from his amphetamine use for 6 months. He wants to get back into training to be a mechanic. You set David up with a mechanic mate of yours to be his apprentice.

After 2 weeks David reports that he isn't getting his proper paid allowance. He says he is still waiting for his paperwork to come through. He thinks it's because your mate is Black and is trying to rip him off.

Your mate tells you that David is a hard worker, but has been getting aggressive and arguing with other staff.

(Scenario adapted from www.waayw.org).

Prompt questions:
- What would be the ethical way to act in this situation?
- Which of the youth work practice responsibilities could you use to guide your thinking?
- If a colleague told you they were in this situation with David, what would you tell them?

Card 2

Chelsea
Chelsea has been coming to your drop in centre, off and on, for 2 years. She came out as a lesbian 18 months ago.

Chelsea has started to dress in only pants and shirts and has asked you to start calling her Clinton. She believes that she is a man.

Her lesbian friends start to tease her saying that she isn't gay anymore and she should get some new heterosexual friends.

Chelsea/Clinton asks if you will take her/him to see a doctor about getting testosterone injections.

(Scenario adapted from www.waayw.org)

Prompt questions:
- What would be the ethical way to act in this situation?
- Which of the youth work practice responsibilities could you use to guide your thinking?
- If a colleague told you they were in this situation with Chelsea, what would you tell them?

Card 3

Habib

Habib has just started at your alternative education service. He has been assigned refugee status but his family is still in his country of origin.

Habib is Muslim and asks if he can set up a prayer mat in one of the spare rooms for his prayer times. The service is managed by a Christian organisation and your program manager doesn't think it is appropriate for Habib to have a prayer mat in the service.

You often overhear other students and staff making negative comments about refugees and Muslims.

(Scenario adapted from www.waayw.org)

Prompt questions:
- What would be the ethical way to act in this situation?
- Which of the youth work practice responsibilities could you use to guide your thinking?
- If a colleague told you they were in this situation with Habib, what would you tell them?

Questions:

- What do you like about the conversation cards? What don't you like?
- How would you use these cards at work?
- What other scenarios would you include in these cards?

4. Supervision templates

The following are suggestions for use in individual or group supervision.

Individual supervision

Ask the employee to describe an ethical challenge they've faced in the last two weeks.

Ask them to identify which sections of the YACVic Code of Ethical Practice can help you think it through together.

Group supervision / Team meeting

Ask a member of the group to describe an ethical challenge they've faced in the last two weeks.

Ask each member of the group to choose one of youth work responsibilities from the YACVic Code of Ethical Practice. Ask them to describe how they would apply it to the ethical challenge being discussed.

Keep talking the challenge through until all of the youth work practice responsibilities have been covered.

Questions:

Would you use these templates for supervision with your staff? How would you improve the templates?

How else might you include the Code of Ethical Practice in supervision sessions?

5. Suggestions for encouraging youth ownership of the Code

How might we make the Code relevant to young people, as well as those who work with them?

1. Should the Code be presented in posters and/or leaflets using 'youth-friendly' language?

2. How might the Code be presented in a way that recognises the diversity of young people's cultural backgrounds?

3. How might the Code be used in a more 'interactive' way with young people? For example, how could it be explained to young program participants, or how might they give feedback on it?

4. Would putting a 'quality assurance'- style Code symbol on the front door, or on the promotional material, of a youth service help young people feel safer and more comfortable?